

Role of arts in the Primary Years Programme

Questionnaire report

November 2008



Introduction

In May and June 2008, the IB sought feedback from teachers and Primary Years Programme (PYP) coordinators in IB World Schools. The purpose of the feedback was to gather information about teaching and learning in arts in PYP schools in order to inform future IB curriculum development. The questions included in the questionnaire related to the organization of arts teaching and learning in each school and to the purpose and use of curriculum documentation in the school.

Respondents

This questionnaire was emailed to PYP coordinators in IB World Schools offering the PYP. They were asked to coordinate responses from arts teachers and class teachers and to submit their feedback within a four-week timeframe. The response rate was around 60%, with 269 schools responding. Of the schools that responded, 58% of the respondents identified themselves as private/independent schools with 36% claiming state or national affiliations.

Arts teaching in schools

Schools were asked to identify who in the school has responsibility for teaching arts. The respondents indicated that the arts was taught by visual arts specialists—80%; music specialists—74%; class teachers—47%; and drama specialists—25%.

Of the arts specialists who responded, 32% of them work in the PYP, as well as in one other programme in the school (for example, MYP).

Links to PYP

Respondents were asked to comment on how often they were able to make links to aspects of the PYP when the teaching of arts falls outside the programme of inquiry. Table 1 summarises the responses.

Table 1

Aspect	Most of the time or always	Occasionally or rarely	Never
Transdisciplinary themes	57%	37%	1%
Central ideas	49%	43%	1%
PYP concepts	67%	29%	1%
Transdisciplinary skills	76%	19%	1%
PYP attitudes	86%	11%	0%

Schools were also asked how often they could make an authentic connection between arts and the school's programme of inquiry. The results for drama, music, and visual arts were as follows.

Drama

22%	One or fewer than one unit of inquiry
15%	Two units
8%	Three units
6%	Four units
4%	Five or six units

Additional comments showed that drama is predominantly the responsibility of the homeroom teacher.

Music

- 24% One or fewer than one unit of inquiry
- 26% Two units
- 13% Three units
- 12% Four units
- 10% Five or six units

Additional comments included the following.

- The music programme makes more links in the early years but as the children get older this happens less as there are separate projects running at each year level e.g. band programme
- The school tries to connect with the profile and/or transdisciplinary skill and/or the concepts
- Our music connection is developing into mainly a conceptual connection. Our goal is to enhance the music program next year with more authentic connections to the transdisciplinary themes
- The teacher connects to the units of inquiry by planning learning experiences to support the comprehension of the central idea
- Music could be used much more, however, homeroom teachers have little knowledge of music and the arts teacher does not have enough time during the class to teach music. A chorus and flute workshop was implemented in the afternoons, but it was voluntary.

Visual arts

- 16% One or fewer than one unit of inquiry
- 22% Two units
- 17% Three units
- 15% Four units
- 21% Five or six units

Additional comments included the following.

- Due to time constraints, I feel one really good connection to a unit is manageable, including paperwork, documentation, meetings with class teachers. It takes 6-8 weeks to create a quality project. However connecting through concepts happens naturally and frequently
- I wrote how often our school would LIKE to have the specialist teachers involved in the planners. Currently, we were told that they need to be involved in all 6 so they are DESPERATELY trying to make this happen. They accomplish this by using the transdisciplinary themes instead of the central idea or lines of inquiry
- Connections are made where it is realistic. Our essential agreements require that the art specialist makes a significant contribution to the planning, teaching, and implementation

of one unit of inquiry as well as other connections at each grade level (minimum one unit/year)

- When the art teachers are involved in the development of the central idea and concepts in the planning stages of a unit of inquiry then authentic integration is able to take place.

Collaboration

A range of collaboration strategies were employed between teachers and arts teachers but the predominant mode was scheduled meetings with class teachers (73%).

Comments regarding collaboration included the following.

- We have just begun to do a 'round robin' timetable for collaborative planning twice a month (when possible). The PYP co-ordinator sends out a schedule and the specialists fill it in based on the grades that they need to plan with
- When the need arises, arts teachers meet with one another or with individual classroom teachers
- All the classroom teachers meet with the art specialists at least once a month but teachers often request meetings with the music teacher on a more frequent basis as the music specialist usually integrates the unit of inquiry into her music programme consistently
- As the specialist teachers have students most of the day it is hard for them to meet regularly with the classroom teachers, the PYP coordinator acts as the liaison between all teachers to communicate ideas for the planners
- 'On the fly', when passing in the corridor or meeting by chance at the coffee machine; speaking in the halls or during other open time; anecdotal and incidental conversations during lunch etc. Sometimes teachers hold informal meetings and share information at any time of the day, as long as they have free time.
- Planners and the programme of inquiry are posted throughout the school and/or on the school's server as an access point for all teachers
- More scheduled meetings are starting to take place as a result of attending the conference on "The Role of the Arts in the PYP"
- Very informal, as all our specialists are part-time and only come in for their lessons, but, with good-will, we feel we are all working towards the same end
- There is no time to schedule with other teachers because teachers plan during specialist classes. The arts teacher has planned infrequently with the PYP Coordinator. Some informal planning occurs between arts teacher, media specialist and PE teacher, particularly on behaviour and logistics. Collaboration does not exist between the arts teacher and home room teachers, though some homeroom teachers do share their unit topics and cooperate with the arts teacher
- Some homeroom teachers work more often with specialists, however the coordinator and the assistant Head of Primary are currently developing a bank of activities in order to further encourage homeroom teachers to integrate specialists into their work.

Reporting

Student involvement and progress in the arts is reported on in all schools, usually in more than one way. Report cards were the most common form of reporting (by 91% of schools), followed by portfolios (by 70% of schools) and three-way or student-led conferences (by 50% of schools). A number of other reporting or communication formats were shared in the comments, including art-specific digital portfolios, arts exhibitions, displays around the school, newsletters, performances, self- and peer-reflections.

Workshops

When asked about participation in PYP workshops, 35% of schools indicated that they have attended the IB workshop in the area of the arts; 62% have not. Many comments reflected the need for more workshops on “The role of arts in the PYP” to be made available for all teachers.

Current curriculum documentation

When asked whether they were using the PYP planner to plan inquiries in arts, 60% of respondents indicated “yes” and 36% indicated “no”.

Schools were asked what documents they referred to for teaching and learning in the arts. The results are:

28%	PYP <i>Drama scope and sequence</i> (2004)
45%	PYP <i>Music scope and sequence</i> (2004)
58%	PYP <i>Visual arts scope and sequence</i> (2004)
54%	Scope and sequence documents developed by the school
38%	National curriculum documents

The responses indicated that the PYP arts scope and sequences (2004) have been used for a range of purposes including as a tool for planning for particular age levels (by 55% of schools), the identification of learning outcomes (by 51% of schools), as a tool for assessment for particular age levels (by 42% of schools), to assist with curriculum mapping (by 41% of schools), to identify sample questions and activities (by 38–42% of schools), and to inform reporting (by 22% of schools). Table 2 shows the perceived usefulness of particular aspects of the PYP arts scope and sequences (2004).

Table 2

Aspect	Useful, or very useful	Not very useful, or do not use
Overall expectations for each age range	66%	21%
Specific expectations	63%	26%
Sample questions, activities, assessments	56%	33%
Resources and comments	50%	38%
Glossary	44%	41%

Further comments regarding the purpose of the PYP *arts scope and sequences* included:

- We find the new arts section in Making the PYP Happen to be very useful in our planning and curriculum mapping. This information could be incorporated into the new scope and sequence
- We need more guidance on how to connect arts curriculum through the key concepts in the PYP - not just through their central idea and units of inquiry. We need guidelines for collaboration and expectations
- Learning continuum beginning with early years
- Planners and ideas for integrating specialty subjects into units of inquiry would be useful. Sample planners need to be provided as long as planners for specialist areas are uniquely redesigned to meet the disciplinary needs of each art
- It would be good to see this document more concise with user friendly wording. The music document is difficult to follow for a classroom teacher (even with adequate music knowledge). A more user friendly version would be helpful
- Many of the gaps in the scope and sequence are address[ed] in the new Making it happen document - could they be combined in some way?

Future documentation

In response to the question “What is included or referred to in a school’s scope and sequence that is not included in the PYP?”, most respondents reported that the strands in PYP aligned with their own schools. However the following aspects were felt to be missing from the PYP arts documents:

- creative movements/dance/choreography
- creative exploration and expression
- creating dramatic sequences
- elements of arts and design
- new technologies applied in visual art (for example, animation, digital art); graphic arts and photography
- aesthetic, critique, art history, technique
- critiquing performances of self and others; analysing all strands and appreciation
- PYP values and principles, how to develop an international mentality
- Media.

Table 3 summarizes the responses to the question “What would teachers most like to see included in the revised arts scope and sequence?”

Table 3

Aspect	Very useful, or useful	Not very useful, or would not use
Overview of learning in arts	78%	9%
Stronger connections between the three arts scope and sequences	74%	17%
Make the PYP essential elements clear	89%	3%
Clear learning outcomes for each strand	84%	5%

Sample materials, questions, activities, assessments	87%	5%
Sample planners for inquiry into arts	89%	4%
Guidelines for planning for arts within the programme	88%	4%

The following comments and suggestions were submitted by respondents to inform the curriculum review process.

- Sample planners would be really useful – both for integrated and stand-alone units in arts. Support in using the planners is also needed by specialist teachers
- Students learn through and about the arts in all grades. There are many opportunities for students to express themselves through art and learn to appreciate all art forms
- It would be helpful to have more guidance on making links with the transdisciplinary skills between the different arts areas
- There is a huge gap between the classroom and specialist teachers' understanding of the arts and the potential of its use within the programme of inquiry. The scope and sequence should attempt to address this gap
- We would like to see more resources like videos, photographs, etc on OCC.

Conclusion

The IB wishes to thank all the schools that responded to this questionnaire. The feedback collected as a result of this questionnaire provides the IB with valuable insights from school-based practitioners, about the role of arts in the PYP. It will inform the curriculum review process leading up to the publication of a revised scope and sequence for arts in November 2009 as well as informing the general development of the PYP.